

AD-A236 915



NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport, R. I.

DRUG INTERDICTION EFFECTIVENESS

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

11 January 1991

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| Comments     |  |

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## REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

|  |  |   |                                |
|--|--|---|--------------------------------|
| 1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION<br><b>UNCLASSIFIED</b>  |  | 1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS  |                                |
| 2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY  |  | 3. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF REPORT<br>DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited. |                                |
| 2b. DECLASSIFICATION / DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE  |  |   |                                |
| 4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)  |  | 5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)   |                                |
| 6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION<br><b>OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT</b>  | 6b. OFFICE SYMBOL<br>(If applicable)<br><b>C</b> | 7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION   |                                |
| 6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)<br><b>NAVAL WAR COLLEGE<br/>NEWPORT, R.I. 02841</b>  |  | 7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)   |                                |
| 8a. NAME OF FUNDING / SPONSORING ORGANIZATION  | 8b. OFFICE SYMBOL<br>(If applicable)             | 9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER   |                                |
| 8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)  |  | 10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS   |                                |
|  |  | PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.   | PROJECT NO.                    |
|  |  | TASK NO.  | WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.        |
| 11. TITLE (Include Security Classification)<br><b>DRUG INTERDICTION EFFECTIVENESS (v)</b>  |  |   |                                |
| 12. PERSONAL AUTHOR<br><b>Donald E. Babcock, LCDR, USN</b>   |  |   |                                |
| 13a. TYPE OF REPORT<br><b>FINAL</b>  | 13b. TIME COVERED<br>FROM TO                     | 14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day)<br><b>91/02/11</b>  | 15. PAGE COUNT<br><b>26</b>    |
| 16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION <b>A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.</b>   |  |   |                                |
| 17. COSATI CODES   |  | 18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)<br><b>Drug Interdiction</b>                 |                                |
| FIELD  | GROUP SUB-GROUP                                  |   |                                |
|  |  |   |                                |
| 19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)<br><br>The military has been executing its detection and monitoring mission in the war on drugs for over a year and pressures continue to mount for an expanded military role. This paper reviews the genesis of the current mission and analyzes the measures of effectiveness used in attempting to measure its success. The scope of this analysis focuses on the development of appropriate measures of effectiveness using NWP 11's technique of mission analysis. To be of use, the Measures of effectiveness applied by the military must focus on the specific detection and monitoring mission assigned vice the larger mission of drug interdiction as a whole. |  |   |                                |
| 20. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/DUNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS  |  | 21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION<br><b>UNCLASSIFIED</b>   |                                |
| 22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL<br><b>CHAIRMAN, OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT</b>  |  | 22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code)<br><b>841-3414</b>   | 22c. OFFICE SYMBOL<br><b>C</b> |

Abstract of  
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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

On September 5, 1989 the President issued the National Drug Control Strategy, a multinational and multi-agency approach to reduce both the supply and demand for illegal drugs. The military was assigned a significant role in this war as the vanguard for the reduction of supply. Secretary Cheney designated the detection and countering of the production, trafficking, and use of illegal drugs as a high priority national security mission of the Department of Defense. The military did not go willingly into this new role, however, and one of their major arguments centered around effectiveness. Numerous studies showed that no interdiction effort could have any meaningful effect on the long term availability of drugs in America. Despite this fact and continued arguments by the military, the mission will not go away. Congress continues to view drug trafficking as the most important threat to the Nation and is even more emphatic than the President that the military play a role.

Given the detection and monitoring mission, the military adopted a course of action to accomplish it that involves the detection, sorting, ID, monitoring and tracking, and handoff of probable drug traffickers to Law Enforcement Agencies. In order to evaluate this course of action, suitable measures of effectiveness are needed. Though numerous criteria have been

used, none have proved suitable, primarily because they miss the mark on the specific mission assigned to DOD. Refocusing on the specific mission assigned to the military can yield some measures of effectiveness useful in evaluating the course of action chosen.

## CHAPTER II

### MISSION ANALYSIS

The current drug war mission for the military was specified in the Defense Appropriation Act for fiscal year 1989 - legislation purposely designed by congress to significantly increase the role of the Armed Forces in the anti-drug war. The law for the first time made DOD the lead agency for detecting and monitoring the flow of drugs into the country. In addition, it made DOD responsible for coordinating air and sea surveillance activities of the federal government, including the elimination of unnecessary duplication. In accordance with the department's lead role, the conference report accompanying the act noted that DOD was expected to "Take prompt action to provide the detection and monitoring capabilities in those border areas that serve as the primary points of entry by drug smugglers."<sup>1</sup> The department was specifically instructed to :

...Develop the capability to conduct effective nighttime surveillance and monitoring of the southern border using a combination of: (1) land, sea, and airbased radar; (2) aircraft capable of monitoring the flight of potential drug smugglers; and (3) integrated communications with the law enforcement agencies that will make the actual searches, seizures, and arrests.<sup>2</sup>

The road to this new mission was not an easy one, however, and it was born out of significant contention between Congress and the Military. Pentagon objections were strong and consistent. Secretary of defense Carlucci argued, as previous secretaries

had, that the national security would be impaired if the armed services were required to divert a substantial portion of their resources to the drug fight; assigning a significant drug interdiction mission to the military would significantly reduce the funds and time left for training military personnel for their real task - war.<sup>3</sup> In addition, he argued that American troops were not suited to performing the mission. As he explained, United States military forces are "...Trained and equipped to shoot everybody who comes over the hill.... They are trained and equipped with weapons of mass destruction, and that is a very important distinction between warfare and law enforcement."<sup>4</sup>

It is this uniquely American distinction between warfare and law enforcement which was the basis for one of the strongest arguments against DOD participation. The Posse Comitatus act of 1878 prohibits the use of the Army and Air Force (and Navy and Marine Corps by convention) to conduct direct civil law enforcement, specifically search, seizure, and arrest. Recent amendments to the act have allowed the use of information gained through military sources for civil law enforcement and limited use of military equipment and base facilities to support civil law enforcement but clear restrictions remain regarding direct assistance. Specifically, military personnel are restricted from:

- Interdiction of a vehicle, vessel, aircraft, or other similar activity



- Search or seizure,
- Arrest, apprehension, stop and frisk, or similar activity,
- Surveillance or pursuit of individuals, or use as informants, undercover agents, investigators, or interrogators, and
- Any other activity which subjects civilians to the exercise of military power that is regulatory, proscriptive, or compulsory in nature.<sup>5</sup>

Testifying before the Joint House/Senate Armed Services Committees, Secretary Carlucci made the military's position on the issue clear:

I remain absolutely opposed to the assignment of a law enforcement mission to the Department of Defense. And I am even more firmly opposed to any relaxation of the posse comitatus restrictions on the use of the military to search, seize, and arrest.... The historical tradition which separates military and civilian authority in this country has served both to protect the civil liberties of our citizens and to keep our armed forces militarily focused at a high state of readiness.<sup>6</sup>

Lastly, study after study concluded that interdiction would have no significant effect on the availability of drugs in America. Even the President in his National Drug Control Strategy admitted that "Recent experiences with drug interdiction have persuasively demonstrated that interdiction alone cannot prevent the entry of drugs, or fully deter traffickers and their organizations."<sup>7</sup> The strategy states that, while the return from interdiction is small, it has a major symbolic and practical value by demonstrating that we are committed to fighting the drug trade, by bolstering our

support for anti-drug treaties, and by introducing another level of risk to the smuggler.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the agreement of some members with the military's position and a feeling among others that they were reaching a political solution to a political problem instead of attacking the real issue, many in Congress increasingly believed that drugs posed the gravest of all threats to the national security and thought the military could do much more to stop the drug flow. The American people rated drugs as their number one concern and Congress wanted to bring big guns to bear to address that concern.

In the end, only the military's argument against amendment of posse comitatus prevailed. DOD responsibilities for detection and monitoring were significantly expanded as described above, but the law did not permit the military to make arrests.

The troubled birth of this new mission is significant on several counts and it allows us to, as NWP-11 explains, "Draw broad conclusions as to the character of the operation."<sup>9</sup> First, despite all the political rhetoric, the purpose of interdiction is not to significantly reduce the flow rate of drugs into the US. It is to make a political statement that we are committed to fighting drugs and to prove our support for international anti-drug treaties. Second, it underscores the clear division of roles between civil and military players in the drug war. With DOD responsibilities limited to

detection and monitoring, their direct impact on the outcome of the drug war is decoupled and hence, very difficult to measure effectively. Lastly, it makes it clear that the military was dragged kicking and screaming into this expanded role and its basic objections remain unanswered.

A brief analysis of enemy capabilities highlights the difficulties of this detection and monitoring mission.

In 1987 alone 355 million people entered or reentered the country, along with more than 100 million vehicles, 220 thousand vessels, 635 thousand aircraft, and eight million containers. In addition more than a million people entered the country illegally between ports of entry.<sup>10</sup> In theory, any of these people or conveyances could be carrying drugs. The problem is to determine which of these potential targets might be transporting drugs, localize that target, and then decide how to apply limited resources to tracking, searching, arresting, or seizing that target.

In addition to the problem posed by the sheer volume of potential targets, the resourcefulness of well financed, well equipped traffickers makes the mission even more difficult. Smugglers and drugs enter the country by many routes. Cocaine is transported by air and sea through the Caribbean, by air and land across the Southwest border with Mexico and by sea in the Pacific. Forty five percent of cocaine seized in 1988 was carried by private aircraft, more than double the amount seized from private vessels, the next most common smuggling

method.<sup>11</sup> The favorite route of cocaine smugglers is the air corridor from Columbia across the Caribbean and through the Bahamas but transshipment through Mexico has become a significant smuggling route. Heroin is transported from Mexico principally by land and from Southeast and Southwest Asia and some African countries by couriers on commercial airlines with the drug concealed on or in their bodies or in their luggage. Heroin is also sent by international mail and increasing amounts are now being seized in airborne and seaborne containers. Marijuana, drug precursor chemicals and other dangerous drugs enter the country primarily by Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico routes; overland from Mexico; and by air carrier from Europe and East Asia.

This diversity of routes and methods allows the trafficker tremendous flexibility. If interdiction is focused on one route or method, he can simply shift to another. As described in the National Drug Control Strategy, stepped up interdiction efforts have caused drug traffickers to change their operational pattern. For example, vigorous air interdiction efforts against the trafficking route into the United States along the eastern coast of Florida have shifted the principle route to Mexico where the drugs are carried across the border by both vehicles and human carriers. Despite such a shift the flow of drugs into the country has continued to grow.<sup>12</sup>

The sophistication of smuggling methods has also continued to grow. The enormous profits associated with the drug trade

allow the traffickers access to some of the most sophisticated technology and methods available.

All of this combines to present what appears to be an almost insolvable problem but, given the constraints of posse comitatus described above, the scope of the military mission is narrowed significantly. Many modes and routes are eliminated; commercial carriers, either air, land, or sea following normal commercial routes are eliminated because they are impossible to identify from innocent commercial carriers using military means. Surveillance of these carriers at their point of origin or their search at their point of entry by military personnel is prohibited by law. Thus these modes and routes are primarily the responsibility of civilian Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA's). With these restrictions, potential targets are reduced primarily to private craft (air, sea, or land) that deviate from normal "profiles" or craft that have been identified through prior intelligence as being potential smugglers. In addition, the search, seizure, and arrest phases of the "engagement sequence" must be conducted by civil authorities and the end of the military portion can be marked as the successful handoff of the trafficker or shipment to these civil authorities.

Thus, given this background and applying NWP-11's techniques of mission analysis, DOD's D&M mission can be reduced to: Hand off probable drug traffickers to Law Enforcement Agencies in order to facilitate their seizure or arrest. Implicit in this

mission is a detection and monitoring engagement sequence:

- Detection
- Sorting (of probable drug traffickers from all other aircraft and surface vessels that have been detected)
- Interception (Directing ships or aircraft to the target for identification)
- Tracking and monitoring (Following a target until it can be "Handed off" to a Law Enforcement Agency)
- Hand Off

The chosen course of action must be designed to successfully complete this engagement sequence.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE COURSE OF ACTION

The course of action chosen to accomplish the newly defined mission was initiated in the spring of 1989 with the establishment by USCINCLANT and USCINCPAC of Joint Task Forces (JTF4 and JTF5 respectively) to coordinate drug interdiction activities. A third Joint Task Force, JTF6, was established in late 1989 at El Paso TX to coordinate drug interdiction activities along the southern land border between Mexico and the U.S.. Discussion here will focus on the operations of JTF4 as representative of the other joint task forces.

JTF4 in Key West Florida is divided into two basic departments, the intelligence center and the Joint Operations Command Center. The detection and sorting half of the mission is the intelligence center's primary job. As a JTF4 watch officer describes it, "Of all the aircraft and ships and so forth that come from South America into the Atlantic coast of the United States and the Gulf of Mexico, we try to somehow sort out who the bad guys are."1 To accomplish this task the intelligence team has a wide range of assets available. They have access to all source military intelligence including national assets and are part of the Joint Narcotics Network with the El Paso intelligence center and the Customs joint C3I center in Miami.

In addition to this intelligence information, JTF4 relies on

a radar surveillance network being put together to cover both air and surface traffick approaching the southern and eastern coasts of the United States. This network includes direct integration of information from the USAF Caribbean Basin Radar Network (CBRN) and North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) early warning radars. This ground based network is supplemented by military surveillance aircraft and tethered radar balloons (Aerostats). The surveillance aircraft, including Air Force E-3 AWACS and Navy E-2C, P-3, and S-3 platforms operate from bases throughout the caribbean and provide the flexibility to extend radar coverage further into the "transit zone" - that airspace and ocean outside the territorial sea of foreign countries and customs water of the U.S.<sup>2</sup> The employment of these assets, coordinated by JTF4, is increasing with AWACS alone flying over 4967 hours in 1988 in support of drug interdiction.<sup>3</sup> Information from aerostats is also being increasingly integrated into the surveillance picture. These are both land and sea based and can provide surveillance coverage in the near transit zone and cost much less than the AWACS performing the same mission. The coverage provided by this system does not come close to building a solid "fence" around the U.S. but, in JTF4's Caribbean area of responsibility, it can provide some coverage of primary trafficking routes and it generates a tremendous amount of contacts.

To sort the good contacts from the bad contacts the watch



team compares them with a "profile" built of a typical smuggler. The integrated intelligence provides the input to this profile. In the case of airborne smugglers, for example, they may be "...the ones that take off without transponders, ones that don't file flight plans, or ones that fly lower than a normal airplane bringing Grandma and Grandpa back from the weekend in the Bahamas".<sup>4</sup> Similar profiles exist for seaborne smugglers.

Once the contact is determined to be a potential smuggler, it is transferred to the Joint Operations Command Center. The operations watch team then coordinates the employment of tracking, monitoring, and law enforcement assets. The goal is to get a law enforcement team in position to make a seizure or arrest. Completing this intercept is a difficult task. The identified aircraft could be enroute an air-drop position where it will drop the drugs to waiting small craft at sea or it could be going to any number of rough airstrips throughout the Caribbean or southern United States. DOD's mission is complete when the handoff occurs. A successful interdiction occurs when a law enforcement agency connects with a smuggler and makes a seizure or arrest.

As with any other joint or combined operation of such magnitude, there are many obstacles to effective operation. Some of the more significant are a shortage of surveillance and particularly law enforcement assets, resistance from different law enforcement agencies to centralized control,

incompatible C3 systems, and ever present disputes over funding. Efforts are in progress, however, to address many of these shortcomings and these efforts are the topic of many studies.<sup>5</sup> The important point is that these efforts do not change the basic nature of JTF4's detection and monitoring engagement sequence; they should make it more effective, however, and the proper selection of measures of effectiveness can help that process.

## CHAPTER IV

### MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS

As NWP-11 explains, properly chosen measures of effectiveness focus the analysis process on the mission's vital objectives. They should:

- Clearly reflect the criteria for success established during the mission analysis,
- Provide a reasonable basis for comparing the relative merits of the courses of action under consideration, and
- Focus on the physical objectives identified early in the planning process and on aspects of the interaction that lend themselves to prediction.<sup>1</sup>

They not only provide the basis for comparing and testing alternative courses of action but, as the operation progresses they allow continuing analysis to fine tune or adjust the course of action to achieve optimum results.

The measures of effectiveness currently applied to the war on drugs do not meet these criteria and this failing is causing problems both in and out of the military. The primary reason that these MOE's fail to meet the NWP-11 criteria is that they do not focus on the specific mission assigned to the military.

One of the first measures to be applied and one that continues to be used is the "Quantity of effort." The combination of military foot dragging and Congressional pressure to

provide more assistance faster seems to have transformed the mission into "Provide as many assets and as much assistance to the fight on drugs as possible." Consequently, the measures of effectiveness used to evaluate the course of action tend towards The number of ship days and flight hours provided. This figure alone provides no useful information regardless of how the mission is stated. Representative Jon Kyl brought this home during the House Armed Services Committee hearing on the military role in drug interdiction. Addressing a statement by the DOD coordinator for drug enforcement policy that during FY 1989 more than 1811 ground and aerial reconnaissance and support missions were flown by the National Guard, he argued that "...This doesn't tell us anything except that people were out flying around and putting in time. What we really need to know is how much good does this do."2

Efforts to answer this question have resulted in several other effectiveness measures. One measure used frequently is the amount of drugs seized during a particular period of time or during a particular operation. Mexican law enforcement officials for example, reportedly seized twice as much cocaine headed for the United States this year as they did a year earlier.<sup>3</sup> The problem with this approach is that it has no meaning if the overall amount of drugs entering the country is not known. A higher drug "flow rate" into the country could provide increased opportunity for seizures and thus a higher seizure rate could result from seizing the same, or even a

lesser percentage of the total flow. In fact, William Smith, Minority Staff Director to the House Select Committee on Narcotics, explains that during the 1970's and 1980's DEA consistently reported to Congress that "seizures of drugs were going through the roof" but as the evidence was examined it became clear that the problem was growing wildly vice being eliminated.<sup>4</sup> Current users of this MOE couple it with the fact that the street price of cocaine is increasing to strengthen their argument.

The idea of using the import price of drugs in the U.S. as a measure of effectiveness is based on the economic concept that the price of a commodity will increase if supply decreases but demand remains the same. In the case of cocaine, however, only about 10 percent of the final street price comes from smuggling costs and profits so, to have significant effect, interdiction must radically increase the costs of smuggling.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, this model is also affected by changes in demand and thus, it is impossible to isolate the effects from interdiction alone.

A final attempt at measuring interdiction success involves the concept of deterrence. Steven Duncan, head of the DOD counternarcotics effort, says he is convinced that DOD efforts have created a deterrent effect; that, for example, there is "...the plane that does not take off from Columbia laden with cocaine this week because they are concerned about the ability of the United States armed forces to monitor and detect

them."6 Such an assertion is impossible to prove, however, and thus is useless in evaluating the effectiveness of a course of action.

This difficulty in establishing useful MOE's may have caused the military to try to avoid their use entirely. Steven Duncan argues that it is important "That we avoid the kinds of artificial [measurements] that cropped up in Viet Nam, like the body count. They can be so misleading."7 But avoidance of a body count mentality does not preclude the use of some meaningful measure of effectiveness. Just as it should have in Viet Nam, it must clearly reflect the actual mission assigned and the criteria for success established in the mission analysis.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

A focus on the real mission is crucial for the proper selection of MOE's. As can be seen from the mission analysis, the criteria for success for the military's part of the drug interdiction mission is not a reduction of the drug flow rate into the US. Thus, even MOE's with some capacity to measure this, such as the price of drugs in the US, do not apply. In order to be of use to JTF4 in evaluating his course of action, the MOE's must relate to his mission of handing over probable drug traffickers and the engagement sequence implicit in this mission. Given this, an appropriate MOE would be the percentage of probable drug traffickers successfully handed over to law enforcement agencies. Such a focused MOE allows for analysis not only of the overall mission but of the individual steps in the engagement sequence. A lack of sufficient law enforcement assets or a weakness in the C3 network used to conduct the handoff, for example, would be immediately reflected by this MOE.

A useful subordinate MOE would be the percentage of actual drug traffickers that are correctly identified as probable drug traffickers. Although the uncertainty of the number of actual traffickers makes this less measurable, this MOE does allow for analysis of parts of the engagement sequence. Probable traffickers, for example, are sorted either by

specific intelligence identifying a particular craft or by the application of a "sorting" profile. Improvements in intelligence or adjustments to the profile would be indicated by this MOE. Since these MOE's accurately reflect the criteria for mission success, they can also be used to assess the relative weight of each of the steps in the engagement sequence and thus allow for the optimum allocation of resources to accomplish the mission.

Adoption of these mission specific MOE's will not make the task any easier. For example, a 1988 El Paso Interdiction Center intelligence "Hit List" consisting of suspected "lookouts" (craft that intelligence or profile indicated were probable drug traffickers) included approximately 17,000 seagoing vessels and 20,000 planes.<sup>1</sup> Nor will it make it significantly more effective in the larger sense of stopping the drug flow - any one of those planes or ships, fully loaded could supply the nation's demand for cocaine for one year.<sup>2</sup>

But, it will allow us to make the most efficient use of the increasing amounts of money being allocated to the drug war and increase, as much as possible, the effectiveness of the military's D&M mission.



## NOTES

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5. Naval Justice School, Commander's Handbook on Military and Civil Law, Rev. 5/89 (Newport, RI: 1989), p. 3-13.

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7. The White House, National Drug Control Strategy, (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1989), p. 73.

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9. U.S. Office of Naval Operations, Naval Operational Planning NWP-11 (Rev. F) (DRAFT), (Washington: November 1989), p. 2-5.

10. The White House, National Drug Control Strategy, p. 73. This document provides a concise overview of the dynamics of the interdiction problem.

11. Ibid., p. 74.

12. Ibid., p. 73.

### CHAPTER III

1. Harvey Simon, The Pentagon and the War on Drugs, Case C16-90-934.0 (Boston: Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1990), p. 18.

2. Donald K. Miskill, "Command, Communications, Control, and Intelligence: the Role of the Joint Task Force in the War on Drugs," Unpublished Research Paper, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 1990, p. 6.

3. "The Nation's Air War on Drugs Takes Off," Aviation Week and Space Technology, 5 February 1990, p. S6.

4. Simon, p. 18.

5. Miskill, pp. 1-13. This paper provides a brief summary of C3I issues involved in establishing JTF4.

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3. William Matthews. "The Elusive Drug War," Navy Times, 10 December 1990, p. 11.

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5. P. H. Reuter et al, Sealing the Borders; the Effects of Increased Military Participation in Drug Interdiction, R-3594-USDP. (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1988), p. xi.

6. Steven Duncan, quoted in Matthews, p. 10.

7. Ibid.

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1. P. H. Reuter et al, Sealing the Borders; the Effects of Increased Military Participation in Drug Interdiction, R-3594-USDP. (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1988), p. 123.

2. Ibid.

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